



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

Updated August 1, 2005

# Fact Sheet

## *Operation Community Shield*

### Overview

In February, ICE launched Operation Community Shield, a national law enforcement initiative that brings all of ICE's law enforcement powers to bear in the fight against violent street gangs. Under Operation Community Shield, ICE works to:

- Identify violent gangs and develop intelligence on their membership, associates and organizations.
- Deter, disrupt and dismantle gang operations by tracing and seizing cash, weapons and other assets derived from criminal activities.
- Seek prosecution and/or removal of gang members from the United States.
- Partner with other law enforcement agencies at the local, state and federal level – both in the United States and abroad – and federal prosecutors to develop a “force multiplier” effect in investigations and other law enforcement actions against gangs.
- Conduct outreach efforts to boost public awareness about the fight against violent gangs.

Initially, the focus of the effort was the Mara Salvatrucha organization, commonly referred to as “MS-13,” one of the most violent and rapidly growing of these street gangs. During Phase I, ICE arrested 359 MS-13 members including 10 clique leaders.

In May, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs that pose a risk to public safety and a concern to national security, putting into motion an aggressive law enforcement action with the goal to investigate, arrest, and prosecute any violent street gang members, leaders, and/or associates of MS-13 as well as other gangs such as Sureños, 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang, Latin Kings, Vatos Locos, Mexican Mafia, La Raza gang, Border Brothers, Brown Pride, Norteno, Florencia 13, Tiny Rascal, Asian Boyz, and Jamaican Posse that routinely seek to exploit or engage in violent criminal activities.

A major enforcement action in July spanned two weeks and resulted in ICE and its law enforcement partners arresting 582 gang members and gang associates, many with criminal records. To date, ICE has arrested more than 1,057 known gang members and associates nationwide.

### Comprehensive Approach

Threat assessments conducted by ICE field offices indicate that a large number of current gang members are foreign-born, are in the country illegally, have a prior criminal conviction, or are

involved in crime with a nexus to the border making them subject to ICE's broad immigration and customs authorities. These authorities include:

- Money laundering and other financial crimes.
- Smuggling of humans or contraband.
- Narcotics and arms trafficking.

### **Intelligence Gathering and Sharing**

ICE has gathered thousands of names of known and suspected gang members from state and local law enforcement, as well as foreign governments. This information is compared with our immigration databases to determine immigration status and develop targeting priorities.

ICE also provides information to support law enforcement partners through the ICE Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC).

At the federal level, ICE coordinates with U.S. Attorneys' offices, the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to maximize the impact of the operation.

### **# ICE #**

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. Operation Community Shield is coordinated by the Human Rights Violators and Public Safety Unit within ICE's Office of Investigations. ICE's Office of Detention and Removal plays a key role in detaining, processing and deporting those gang members who can be removed from the United States. The ICE Office of Intelligence collects and analyzes information on gang members and activities to provide leads to ICE investigators and other law enforcement agencies.*